

**Amendment to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): An iron-protein hydrolysate complex which comprises ferrous ions chelated to partially hydrolyzed egg white protein having a molecular weight in the range of about 2,000 to about 6,000 ~~500 to about~~.

Claim 2 (cancelled).

Claim 3 (original): A complex according to claim 1 in which the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein is microbial protease hydrolysate.

Claim 4 (original): A complex according to claim 3 in which the microbial protease is obtained from *Aspergillus oryzae* and contains both endo-peptidase and exo-peptidase.

Claim 5 (original): A complex according to claim 1 in which partially hydrolyzed egg white protein is a microbial protease hydrolysate obtained by hydrolyzing egg white protein with a protease obtained from *Aseprgillus oryzae* and containing both endo-peptidase and exo-peptidase, and a protease obtained from *Bacillus licheniformis* and containing endo-proteinase.

Claim 6 (previously presented): A complex according to claim 1 which contains about 4.5% to about 10% by dried weight of ferrous irons.

Claim 7 (original): A complex according to claim 1 which is stable at neutral pH but disassociates at a pH below about 3.

Claim 8 (currently amended): An iron-protein hydrolysate complex which comprises ferrous ions chelated to partially hydrolyzed egg white protein which is a microbial protease hydrolyzate; the microbial protease contains both endo-peptidase and exo-peptidase, the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein has a molecular weight in the range of about 2,000 to about 6,000.

Claim 9 (original): A complex according to claim 8 in which the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein has a molecular weight in the range of about 500 to about 10'000.

Claim 10 (cancelled).

Claim 11 (previously presented): A complex according to claim 8 which contains about 4.5% to about 10% by dried weight of ferrous ions.

Claim 12 (original): A complex according to claim 8 which is stable at neutral pH but disassociates at a pH below about 3.

Claim 13 (currently amended): An iron-protein hydrolysate complex which comprises ferrous ions chelated to partially hydrolyzed egg white protein; the complex containing about 1% to about 10% by dried weight of ferrous ions, the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein has a molecular weight in the range of about 2,000 to about 6,000.

Claims 14-15 (cancelled).

Claim 16 (original): A complex according to claim 13 in which the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein is microbial protease hydrolysate.

Claim 17 (original): A complex according to claim 13 in which the fungal protease contains both endo-peptidase and exo-peptidase.

Claim 18 (original): A complex according to claim 13 which is stable at neutral pH but disassociates at a pH below about 3.

Claim 19 (currently amended): A sterilized liquid beverage which contains lipid and a stable iron fortification system, the iron fortification system comprising an iron-protein hydrolysate complex of ferrous ions chelated to partially hydrolyzed egg white protein, the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein has a molecular weight in the range of about 2,000 to about 6,000.

Claim 20 (original): A beverage according to claim 19 which is a chocolate containing beverage.

Claim 21 (currently amended): A sterilized liquid beverage which contains polyphenols and a stable iron fortification system, the iron fortification system comprising an iron-protein

hydrolysate complex of ferrous ions chelated to partially hydrolyzed egg white protein, the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein has a molecular weight in the range of about 2,000 to about 6,000.

Claim 22 (original): A beverage according to claim 21 which is a tea beverage.

Claim 23 (original): A beverage powder which contains lipid and a stable iron fortification system, the iron fortification system comprising an iron protein hydrolysate complex of ferrous ions chelated to partially hydrolyzed egg white protein.

Claim 24 (original): A beverage powder according to claim 23 which contains cocoa.

Claim 25 (currently amended): A process for preparing an iron fortification system, the process comprising:

enzymatically hydrolyzing an egg white protein using a microbial protease to provide a partially hydrolyzed egg white protein;

adding a ferrous source to the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein under acidic conditions; and

raising the pH to 6.5 to 7.5 for forming a ferrous-hydrolyzed egg white protein complex as the iron fortification system, the partially hydrolyzed egg white protein has a molecular weight in the range of about 2,000 to about 6,000.

Claim 26 (previously presented): A complex according to claim 1 which contains about 1% to about 2% by dried weight of ferrous ions.

Claim 27 (previously presented): A complex according to claim 8 which contains about 1% to about 2% by dried weight of ferrous ions.

Claim 28 (previously presented): A complex according to claim 13 which contains about 4.5% to about 10% by dried weight of ferrous ions.